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General and complete disarmament: relationship between disarmament and development

Relationship between disarmament and development

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. Since 1987, the General Assembly has annually requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the action programme adopted by the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development, which was held at United Nations Headquarters in September 1987.[1] The action programme outlined a multisectoral mandate demanding close cooperation between the economic and political sectors of the Secretariat.[2] In pursuance of those requests, the Secretary-General has submitted 10 reports. The first three of these reports (A/44/449, A/45/592 and A/46/527) describe the activities undertaken in implementation of the action programme by the Secretariat in which the Department for Disarmament Affairs played a coordinating role. The fourth and fifth reports (A/47/452 and A/48/400), submitted under severe resource constraints on the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, called attention to the changing international context. The sixth report (A/49/476) after providing an overview of United Nations involvement in the subject and highlighting the latest trends, asked for further guidance from the Member States. In the seventh and eighth reports (A/50/388 and A/51/207) it was pointed out that submission of further reports would depend upon a review and evaluation of the action programme by Member States in the light of a changing international situation.

2. In paragraph 3 of its resolution 51/45 D of 10 December 1996, the General Assembly invited Member States to communicate to the Secretary-General their views and proposals for the implementation of the action programme, as well as any other views and proposals with a view to achieving the goals of the action programme. No communication was received by the Secretary-General. This was reflected in the ninth report to the General Assembly (A/52/228), which also repeated the earlier request of the seventh and eighth report that,

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in the absence of further guidance from Member States, there were no new developments to report.

3. In paragraph 3 of its resolution 52/38 D of 9 December 1997, the General Assembly again invited Member States to communicate to the Secretary-General their views and proposals for the implementation of the action programme as well as any other views and proposals with a view to achieving the goals of the programme, within the framework of current international relations. No communication was received by the Secretary-General.

4. In paragraph 4 of resolution 52/38 D, the Secretary-General is requested to continue to take action, through appropriate organs and within available resources, for the implementation of the action programme adopted at the International Conference. The present report is submitted in pursuance of paragraph 5 of resolution 52/38 D, which requests the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session.

II. Actions taken

5. Paragraph 35 (ix) d of the action programme recommends that the ongoing work of the United Nations for a systematic examination of various problems of defining, reporting and comparing military budget data should be intensified. This recommendation is being carried out in the framework of General Assembly resolutions on "Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures" in accordance with a standardized instrument of reporting developed in 1980. In order to promote wider participation by Member States, not more than 35 of which are currently providing information to the United Nations by using the standardized instrument, the Secretary-General has been holding occasional consultations with other international agencies and regional bodies which also receive reports on military expenditures by national Governments. The latest of such consultations were held at the United Nations Headquarters on 23 April 1998. Specific recommendations to promote wider participation in the reporting instrument are given in details in the Secretary-General's report to the current session of the General Assembly in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 52/32 of 9 December 1997 on objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures.

6. In pursuance of paragraph 35 (ix) b of the action programme, the Secretary-General had established a high-level interdepartmental task force to foster and coordinate the incorporation of disarmament-development perspective in the activities of the United Nations system. The task force had the following composition: the Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation; the Under-Secretary-General, Department of International Economic and Social Affairs; the Under-Secretary-General, Department of Public Information; the Assistant Secretary-General, Office for Research and the Collection of Information; and the Under-Secretary-General, Department for Disarmament Affairs.

7. The Task Force determined the political priorities for, and oversaw the operational activities in, the interrelated aspects of disarmament and development in two phases. During 1987–1990, the emphasis was on the undertaking of activities by the Secretariat in three broad areas: monitoring trends in military spending; promoting collective knowledge of non-military threats to international peace and security; and facilitating an exchange of national experiences in conversion from military to civilian fields. During 1990–1993, greater attention was devoted to expanding networks of contacts with national and international

bodies so that the United Nations could act as a catalyst by providing information, guidance and expertise.

8. In paragraph 2 of his report to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session (A/47/452), the Secretary-General stated that the composition of the high-level Task Force would be reviewed in the light of the organizational changes in the Secretariat. Since then, the Department for Economic and Social Affairs has undertaken a study of trends and issues in international arms trade and an evaluation of the consequences of reductions in military spending. It intends to continue addressing issues such as determinants, levels and socio-economic consequences of military expenditures.

9. Bearing in mind the restructuring of the political and economic sectors of the Secretariat, the following composition is now proposed for a high-level steering group on disarmament and development: the Under-Secretary-General for the Department for Disarmament Affairs; the Under-Secretary-General for the Department for Economic and Social Affairs; and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme. As earlier, the Department for Disarmament Affairs would continue to be responsible for coordination and substantive servicing of the Steering Group and would act as the focal point for disarmament and development in the Secretariat.

10. To follow up on the recommendation in paragraph 35 (ix) e of the action programme, the Department for Disarmament Affairs is exploring the possibility of organizing periodic workshops to undertake analyses of the impact of global military expenditures on the world economy. In view of the continuing financial constraints on the Organization, this proposed activity would become more affordable with voluntary contributions by Member States.

Notes

[1] See *Final Document of International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development*, New York, 24 August–11 September 1987 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.87.IX.8).

[2] See paragraph 35 of the Final Document cited above.